



**Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet
Texas National Cemetery Foundation Veterans Day Program
Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery
Admiral Patrick M. Walsh
Thursday November 11, 2010**

Veterans and service members, friends and family.

I am deeply humbled to spend Veterans Day here with you.

I am especially grateful to the Texas National Cemetery Foundation and many other organizations that support our veterans and their families – for their tireless efforts and steadfast commitment to honor the memory of military veterans.

I am thankful for this visit; it is my first. I am struck by – the serenity, the peacefulness, and calm – it puts our minds at-ease and affords families and loved ones the opportunity for quiet reflection. The Texas landscape, the rolling hills and the easy breeze remind us of gentler and playful times in our youth. But as I shift my view, the seemingly endless array of markers steal my gaze...row after row, headstone by headstone, all uniform, all equal, all painstakingly and neatly kept with the care and honor so deserving of the individual. But as I look at each marker, my view and my focus stops...as I take the list of names and go down it, name after name creates one succeeding image after another -- images in my mind of faces of men and women, old and young, active duty, reservists, guardsmen, veterans, and dependents...some blessed with a full life, others blessed by giving their life so others might live.

We are so lucky to have had the life, the dedication, the vision, and the persistence, of Cloyde Pinson, Sr., the founder of the Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery. He dedicated this cemetery on the 33rd year anniversary from the day his son was killed in Vietnam. Cloyde understood the extensive history of military duty among families in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. He saw the need long ago for a national cemetery to care for our veteran community. His legacy is an enduring gift to this state, our nation and most of all – to our families. Every day in this

National Cemetery, family members visit the graves of loved ones, and veterans come to honor their friends. And every day, in solemn ceremony, another veteran is laid to rest here. Cloyde's idea succeeded and brought more than 28,000 veterans and dependents to these peaceful surroundings and hallowed grounds. [Thank you, Cloyde – applause.]

It is good to see so many supporters here today. I see sons and daughters, fathers and mothers, aunts and uncles, friends and neighbors...whether you are here to honor the memory of a loved one who rests here or to show thanks for those who still serve, we are all bound together by the common thread of respect for service. Our nation has been blessed throughout our history that in times of turmoil or crisis, we can rely on fellow citizens to take great risk to themselves and their lives to protect us. Even in this time of war with sacrifices borne by families, we have young Americans who continue to raise their right hand and honor those who have sacrificed everything. This morning, I had the honor and privilege of administering the oath of enlistment to 120 new recruits from all of the services...witnessed by hundreds of veterans, families, and citizens.

It is a familiar cycle of service that veterans before them took...and it is this pursuit of ideals and principles greater than self that keeps our nation free.

These principles of service are part of the makeup of who we are and what we do—and are part of the fabric of our culture. It is here that our history can inform and instruct. In the post World War I era, the nation sat passively isolated and alone while totalitarian regimes invaded, ransacked, and conquered countries across Europe and across Asia. America had suffered significant losses in World War I and in the economic depression that followed; for many reasons, the country resisted involvement or entrapment in potentially another foreign war...segments of the population simply took an isolationist view. In the summer of 1941, Secretary of Interior, Harold Ickes, held a different view and appealed to the American people directly, to make them aware of the far greater cost that American isolation meant to our fellow man with this impassioned plea aimed at the very fabric of our society and soul of our citizens.

“What constitutes an American?” He asked, “Not color nor race nor religion. Not the pedigree of his family nor the place of his birth. Not the coincidence of his citizenship. Not his social

status nor his bank account. Not his trade or his profession. An American is one who loves justice and believes in the dignity of man. An American is one who will fight for his freedom and that of his neighbor. An American is one who will sacrifice property, ease and security in order that he and his children may retain the rights of free men. We know that freedom, like peace, is indivisible. We cannot retain our liberty if three-fourths of the world is enslaved.

Brutality, injustice, and slavery, if practiced as dictators would have them, in the long run would destroy us as surely as a fire raging in the nearby neighbor's house would burn ours if we didn't help to put out his. We must do everything to restore freedom to people." [Otherwise, our lives are at risk.]

These principles shape us as we prepare ourselves physically, mentally, and academically for military service, which culminates in reciting the oath of enlistment, a seminal event in an individual's public life. General John Wickham, Jr, reminded us that, "When we take the oath and swear to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States," we stand shoulder to shoulder with the framers of the Constitution who mutually pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor. We do this freely because it is the Constitution that guarantees all citizens the rights and obligations which are the essence of being American. And it is the Constitution that our comrades have, in other times and places, sacrificed to preserve."

The men and women who rest here are veterans who started their life's journey from diverse parts of America. These were men and women of principle who answered the call of a wounded nation, to lead a life of consequence, to take action, to be ready, and to take risks for a cause larger than themselves...a cause today that is equally as large and a risk felt equally as great by those who were on watch before us. They left the safety of their local neighborhoods, the security of protected surroundings, joined our team, and performed a mission in a time and place where uncommon valor was common virtue.

As we walk these hallowed grounds, we remember their youthful laughter, exuberance, and innocence. We remember them as larger than life, yet as humble as they were brave. Collectively, we remember them as one team that had the courage, integrity, and pride to take

any challenge and solve any problem. They chose to offer themselves for a simple but noble purpose: to serve. That was their gift to us.

Today is important...for many reasons that cut across and connect to several generations. Whether we realize it, sense it, or recognize it completely, we are part of a great circle of community, history, and tradition, where one generation cares for and nurtures the next. We do not know the men and women who rest here for their status or their worldly belongings. But their distinguished performance, spirit, and service. They are veteran servicemen and women. They are the kid next door, down the block, up the street, or over on the farm. They chose a life of consequence and accomplished something extraordinary after living simple, ordinary lives, and in doing so, etched their name in history. They have done that for us; now it is our charge to carry their example of service and leadership forward for those in our trust.

They revealed their true character when they answered the call to service early in their respective lives. The interesting thing about service...is oftentimes, you do not realize that you are actually doing it...you do not wake up in the morning and think about your life's work in those terms. Instead, you think about what you can do for other people, how you can help in their development, how you can make a difference in the world around them, how you can be an impact player and live a life of consequence, a life that matters.

The service that we recognize and honor from our veterans laid to rest here has taught us – the personal satisfaction that we receive from serving will give us the greater benefit for the act that we provide for others. It puts into action the phrase President Lyndon Baines Johnson coined when he said, "Ours is not a spectator society." Those who choose to serve...play on the line of scrimmage and refuse to take a seat in the stands.

Veterans offer themselves...they chose this profession as a vocation and a calling, with satisfaction as their true reward and at personal risk to themselves. They are the true treasure that a family provides her nation; I have not met a more powerful force.

They honored us with their service; we will honor them with our mission. They represented you and me with pride and distinction; now it is our time to stand proudly for what they represent.

We are thankful for what they gave and grateful for what they taught. Now the burden falls to us to carry the spirit forward of those who rest here. Wherever you will find us, you will find reminders of the wonderful impact they had on our lives, the imprint they have left on our souls, and the commitment that we have made to each other. Their stay on this earth was for a very short time, but “their work goes forward, their course endures, hope still lives, and their dreams shall never die.”

Today, we serve because our country needs us. We wear the cloth of the nation; we work on behalf of others; we sacrifice the routine and normalcy of our own and our family’s lives for the needs of the country that we represent. Today, we read about how the country has grown weary of conflict. We know and understand the impact that the war has had on the economy, on our families, and on each other.

But this I can say with confidence and pride –

If ever there was a country worth living in

If ever there was a country worth defending

If ever there was a country worth fighting for

If ever...in the history of the world there was a country whose values and principles were worthy of our sacrifice...it is the United States of America.